

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 001468

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/23/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [XA](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: OULD AL-TAYA ARRIVES IN DOHA, JOINING OTHER EXILES

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (d).

11. (U) Ousted Mauritanian president Maouiya Ould al-Taya arrived in Doha at 8 PM August 22 with his family. According to a local news report, he was also accompanied by the "teacher of his children" and is staying at a luxury hotel. He arrived on a Qatar Airways plane via Cairo. Sources indicate that the GOQ requires that he not engage in political activity while taking refuge in Qatar.

Host for Exiles

12. (SBU) Taya joins a motley mix of forced and voluntary exiles in Doha. Prominent among them is Dr. Yousef al-Qaradawi, who as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood ran afoul of the Nasser regime in Egypt and was given a professorship at Qatar University in 1962. The former Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs under Saddam Hussein, Naji Sabri al-Hadithi, has found refuge here, as have Saddam's wife and one daughter (as well as an assortment of family members for other former Iraqi regime figures). The Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev found asylum in Doha until his assassination in February 2004. Hamas leader Khalid Meshaal resided in Qatar for some time, and members of his family have remained. Bilal Phillips, a Canadian Salafist Muslim, moved to Qatar after his residency in the United Arab Emirates was revoked; he teaches at the Qatar Guest Center. In the same category is Wagdy Ghoneim, an Egyptian national expelled from the U.S. in early 2005 for supporting extremism in mosques. Finally, the president of the former Islamic Salvation Front, Abbasi Madani, chose to reside in Qatar after his release from Algerian prison in 2003.

13. (C) Qatar has thus become something of a refuge for a range of personalities from across the political spectrum. As it did with Taya, the GOQ generally requires that "guests" not create political trouble. Madani, for example, does not criticize the Algerian government and recently supported President Bouteflika's recent proposal for national reconciliation.

Possible Reasons for Granting Asylum

14. (C) There are several theories why Qatar would choose to host such a disproportionate number of estranged figures. A simple one is that, though Qatar's economic might is growing apace, it remains a rather tiny political entity, and these figures help the rest of the world locate the country on the political map. Linked to this idea is that fact that some of these individuals serve as a resource for the satellite channel Al Jazeera. Madani has appeared several times on the channel, and Qaradawi has a regular show.

15. (C) It is not necessarily true that Doha plans to use these exiles as political chips against the governments of their home countries. To the contrary, Doha maintains strong relations with Algeria, to continue with the Madani example. And the GOQ did not state a position, either in support or critical, on the Mauritanian coup. It is expected that hosting Taya will not change Qatar's neutrality in the matter. Nevertheless, the exiles extend Doha's range of useful international contacts.

16. (C) While aiming to show Qatar as open to a wide range of political views, the variety of circumstances show that each case is judged independently. Ould Taya's reported close ties with the Qatari Amir would likely have been decisive. Some minor characters may have been drawn to Qatar for its relaxed reputation and were able to remain because the government does not want to create an unnecessary stir by kicking them out.

Comment

17. (C) In Qatar it is the Islamic-oriented exiles who are active giving lectures (at one level) or nurturing a devoted following (at the higher level). Ould Taya, as politician out of power from a poor country in the "far west," will probably slip into relative obscurity.

UNTERMEYER